THE OLD MAN'S BAG

T.W.H. CROSLAND AND J.R. MONSELL

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The old man went for a walk and took the bag with him.

THE OLD MAN'S BAG

BY
T. W. H. CROSLAND

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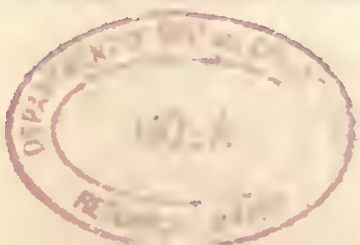
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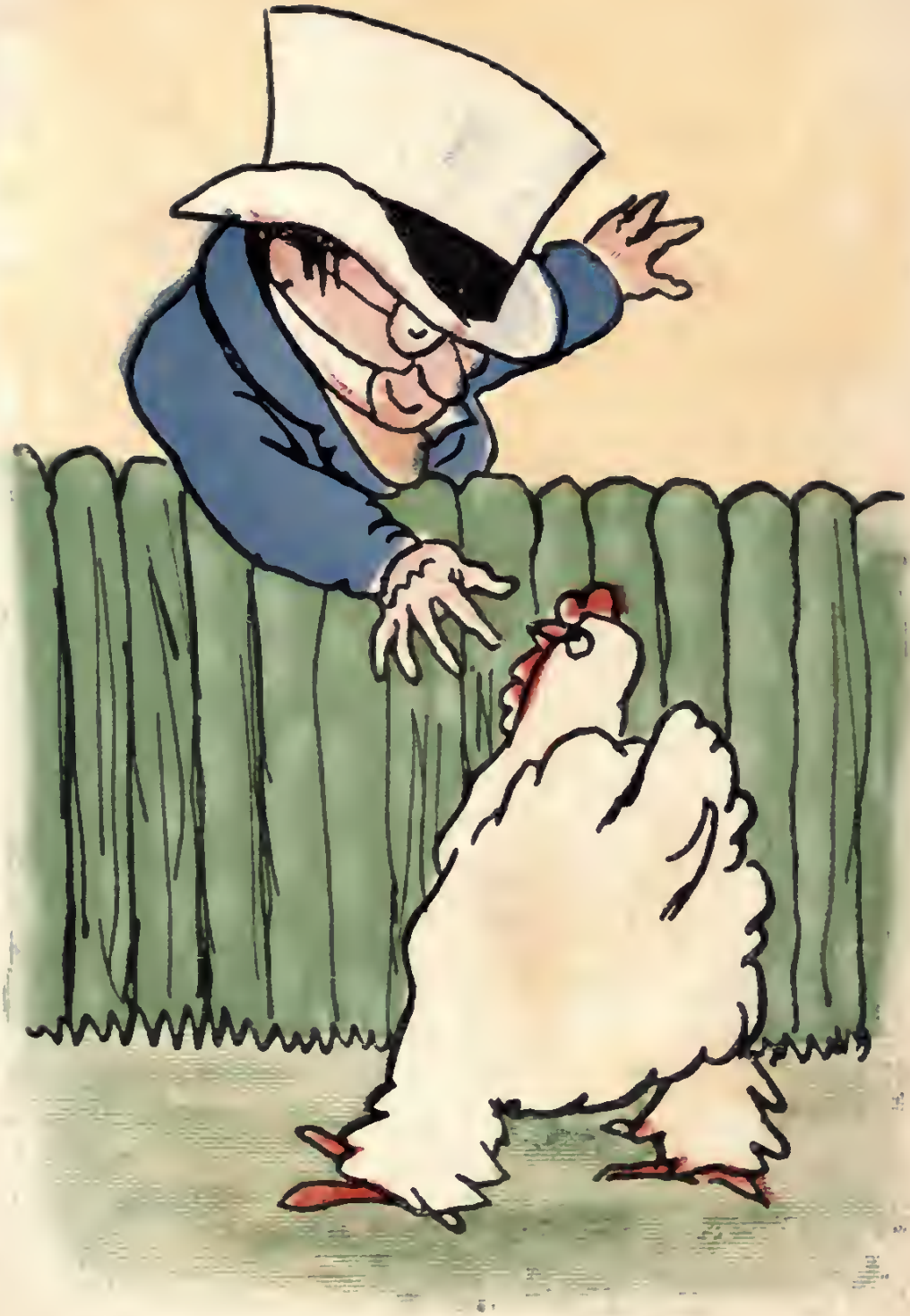
THE OLD MAN'S BAG.

CHAPTER I.

THE old man lived in a wood. He had a wife and a bag. The bag was quite a large bag. One day the old man went out for a walk. He took the bag with him. By and by he saw a hen in a field. Now when you see a hen in a field you say "Chuck, chuck!"

The old man said "Chuck, chuck!" And the hen came to him. So that he caught her by the neck and put her in his bag. She made a great to-do, but he put her in.

On his way home, just as he turned a corner, the old man saw a policeman. The policeman had a red suit. He was one of those policemen who wear red suits because they are tired of wearing blue. The red policeman looked



The old man said "Chuck, chuck!"
and the hen came to him.

very hard at the old man and very hard at his bag. In fact he looked so very very hard that the old man got frightened and turned round and ran away.

Of course the red policeman ran after him. When they had run about five miles the old man dropped his bag in order that he might run quicker. The red policeman had made up his mind to catch him; so that he did

not stop to pick up the bag but kept on running after the old man. At length when they had run about ten miles he caught him.

"Now, sir," said the red policeman, "what have you got in that bag?"

"Nothing," said the old man.

"Oh, you wicked old person," said the red policeman. "You know perfectly well that you have a hen in it. But you

must come back with me, and we will soon find out."

So the red policeman took the old man back to the place where he had dropped the bag. The bag was there, and the red policeman picked it up and opened it with great care. But the hen had got away. There was a big hole in the corner of the bag, and through this the hen had squeezed herself and run home as fast as ever she could. When the

policeman found that the bag was empty he looked much puzzled. The old man for his part smiled a great deal. "I told you there was nothing in it," he said.

The red policeman said, "Well, I expect I shall have to let you go this time. BUT MIND YOU DON'T DO IT AGAIN."

And the old man went home quite cheerfully with his bag under his arm.



The red policeman ran after him.

CHAPTER II.

When the old man got home to his house in the wood he hung the bag up tidily on a nail. Then he sat down in a chair and began to laugh. He laughed for nearly a quarter of an hour by the clock. At length his wife came in to him from the garden and said,

"Whatever are you laughing at?"

"Oh," replied the old man, holding his sides, "I am so amused!" Then he went on laughing. He laughed so much indeed that the tears came into his eyes and he nearly choked. His wife had to pat his back and give him a drink of water to put him right.

Then he told her what had happened. How he had put

a hen in his bag, how the red policeman had run after him, how he dropped the bag and let the policeman catch him, and how when the policeman took him back to the bag, the hen was gone.

"Did she open the bag and fly away?" said the old woman.

"No," said the old man. "She got out through that hole in the corner."

"Ah," said the old woman, "I must sew up that hole."

And she took the bag down from its nail and sewed up the hole. For she was a very neat woman and she did not like to see holes in bags.



"Whatever are you laughing at?"

CHAPTER III.

THE next day was market day. On market day people who have butter or cheese to sell take it into the market to sell it. And people who have money and happen to want butter or cheese go into the market to buy it. The old man's wife had nothing

to sell. Neither had she any money. But she wanted some butter very badly. So she took the old man's bag off the nail and carried it to market. She walked round the market with the bag under her arm and looked at all the stalls and enquired how much the strawberries were a pound; but she did not buy anything because she had no money. In a little while she came to a stall on which there

were six rolls of fine fresh butter, and in front of them was a card on which the man who brought the butter to market had written—

BUTTER IS CHEAP TO-DAY.

"I am glad butter is cheap to-day," said the old woman to herself, and when the man who had brought the butter to market was not looking she picked up a roll and

dropped it into her bag. Then she ran away as fast as she could.

When she got round the corner the red policeman saw her. He shouted out, "What have you got in that bag?"

"Nothing," said the old woman, still running.

But the policeman kept running after her. When they had run about five miles the old woman dropped the bag, so that she might run



She took the bag down and sewed up the hole.

quicker. The policeman, however, had made up his mind to catch her, and when they had run about ten miles he caught her.

"Now," he said, "you must come back with me to your bag, and we will see if there is anything in it." The old man's wife said that she was sure there was nothing in it. "All right," said the policeman, "but if you don't mind we will go back and see." So

they went back to the bag, and the policeman opened it with great care. Inside he found the roll of butter.

The old man's wife began to cry. "Oh dear, oh dear," she said, "what a pity it is that I sewed up that hole."

"Why?" asked the red policeman.

"Because if I had not sewn up the hole the butter might have got out, like my husband's hen."

"You are a very foolish old woman," said the policeman. "Do you not know that a roll of butter cannot walk like a hen?"

"Is that really so?" said the old woman. "Well, well. But I have seen butter run when it was melted."

"Never mind that," said the red policeman, "you will have to come with me to prison."

"I am too busy to go with

you just now," said the old woman, "and my husband wants the butter for his tea. But if you like to call for me in the morning and the weather is fine I will come with you with pleasure."

"You are very polite," said the red policeman. "If you had been rude I should have made you go with me now. As it is I will call for you in the morning providing it doesn't rain."



"Butter is cheap to-day!"

"Thank you so much," said the old woman.

And she shook the red policeman warmly by the hand and went off to her husband.

CHAPTER IV.

When she got home the old man was sat in his chair by the fire. She could see by his face that he was in a bad temper. But she went up to him and kissed him and said, "Please don't be grumpy, for I have brought you something very nice for your tea."

"What is it?" said the old man, "a hen?"

"No," she said, "people don't have hens for tea, do they?"

"Perhaps not," said the old man. "But if you had brought a hen she might have laid an egg, and I could have had that. You know very well that I am fond of new laid eggs."

"New laid eggs are all very fine," said the old woman,

"but butter is cheap to-day. I have brought you a beautiful fresh roll."

The old man smacked his lips.

While they were having tea the old woman began to laugh very much.

"What are you laughing at?" said the old man. "Did you meet the red policeman?"

"Yes, I did," said the old woman.

"And did he catch you?"



"You are a very foolish old woman."

"Yes, he did," said the old woman.

"And he let you go?"

"Yes, he did," said the old woman.

"Why?"

"Because I was polite to him," said the old woman.

"Well I never," said the old man.

"But he is coming for me in the morning, providing the weather is fine," said the old woman.

The old man sat still in his chair and thought a great deal.

And by and by he said, "If you had asked the red policeman to tea like a sensible woman he might have let you off altogether."

"I shall know better next time," said the old woman.

CHAPTER V.

When the old man and his wife woke up next morning they looked out of the window and saw that the weather was quite fine. The old man began to whistle and sing. He always did this when the weather was fine because he said fine weather

always made him feel in such good spirits. In a little while the old woman began to sing too. Then the old man stopped.

"What are you singing for?" he said to the old woman.

"I feel in such good spirits," the old woman replied.

"Oh, you do, do you?" said the old man. "You appear to forget that the red policeman is coming for you."



Who should step in but the red policeman.

"Oh dear, oh dear," said the old woman. "What a bad memory I have to be sure. Whatever shall I do?" And she burst into tears.

"There, there," said the old man, "don't cry. We will give him sixpence when he calls, and ask him to have a piece of bread and butter with jam on it. Then perhaps he will go away."

They went downstairs and had breakfast. They had just

finished when there came an awfully loud knock at the door. The old woman went very pale.

"It is the red policeman," she said.

The old man went to open the door. But the old woman pulled him back.

"You are forgetting the sixpence," she said, "and the piece of bread and butter with jam on it."

"Of course, of course," said

the old man, and he felt in his pocket for sixpence while the old woman cut a nice large thick slice of bread and covered it with butter and jam.

"Perhaps after all," said the old man, "we had better not open the door, but hand the policeman the sixpence and the bread and butter with jam on it through the window."

So he opened the window

a little way and held out the sixpence and the bread and butter with jam on it to the person outside.

"Thanks very much," said the person outside. And he put the sixpence in his pocket and began to eat the bread and butter with jam on it. And when he had finished eating he knocked again very loudly at the door.

"Go away," said the old man. "My wife is not



"Please measure me for a soldier's suit."

coming out with you to-day."

"I don't want your wife to come out with me," said the person at the door; "I have called to look at the gas meter."

"We haven't got a gas meter now," said the old man, "we burn nothing but electric light."

"Many, many thanks," said the person at the door, and he went away.

"I feel all of a flutter," said the old woman, sinking into a chair.

"So do I," said the old man. "And he has got my sixpence too."

CHAPTER VI.

In a little while the old woman began to put the breakfast things away. Afterwards she took up the table-cover and went out into the garden with it to shake off the bread crumbs. As she stepped out of the door who should step in but the red policeman. The old woman

trembled very much when she saw him go in, and she shook the table-cover several times over in order that she might think what to say to the red policeman. Just then it began to rain. The old woman ran into the house at once.

"Good morning, madam," said the red policeman, and he made a nice bow.

"Good morning, sir," said the old woman. "What, might I ask, brings you here?"

"I have called, madam," replied the red policeman, making another bow, "for the purpose of taking you with me to prison for stealing a roll of butter."

"Where is the roll of butter?" said the old woman.

The policeman looked very hard at the butter dish, but there was no butter on it. The old man and his wife and the gas-man had eaten it all.

"I beg your pardon, I am sure," said the policeman.

"The idea!" said the old woman. "Besides you said you would not call this morning unless the weather were fine, and you see for yourself that it is now raining cats and dogs."

"I am truly sorry, madam," said the policeman, bowing once more. "When I come to think of it, I did say that I would not call if it rained.

Pray forgive me. We all make mistakes sometimes, you know."

"I don't like such mistakes," said the old woman. "Now kindly leave the house."

"Oh, please don't turn me out," said the red policeman, "it is raining very hard indeed, and I might get my feet wet."

"We should always be kind," said the old woman,

"even to policemen, and as it is raining and I left my umbrella in an omnibus the other day, I will lend you my sunshade. But please go."

The old woman put the sunshade into the policeman's hand. He looked at it very hard.

"It is a blue one," he said. "It is not fashionable to wear a blue sunshade with a red suit. Thank you all the same, but I think I will go without it."

He went.

The old man, who had been quietly laughing to himself, danced about with joy when he saw the policeman leave. Then he ran to the window and put his head out, and called out after the policeman, "I say. When your clothes are quite wet enough be sure you come back and have them dried."

But the red policeman took no notice of him.

CHAPTER VII.

THE red policeman got so wet that by the time he reached his house all the dye had come out of his suit. He felt very angry indeed.

"I must try not to make mistakes," he said, "sometimes they bring one into fearful trouble. As my suit

is spoilt I think I will give up being a policeman. A policeman without a suit is no good at all."

So he went to bed and had hot bricks to his feet and a mustard plaster on his chest, and sent for the tailor to measure him for a new suit of clothes.

When the tailor came the policeman said to him, "I am quite tired of being a policeman, and I think I should

now like to be a soldier. Please measure me for a soldier's suit. The coat you will make of green cloth and the trousers must be yellow."

"But," said the tailor, "soldiers wear scarlet coats and blue trousers."

"That is just the point," said the policeman. "I don't want to be like all the others. If I did I should go in for khaki. Just you do what I tell you, and make me a green



He began to strut about in his new clothes.

coat and yellow trousers at once."

The tailor said, "Yes, sir," and went away.

In a few days he called again, bringing with him a yellow coat and green trousers. The policeman could have cried with disappointment.

"Didn't I tell you quite plainly that I wanted a green coat and yellow trousers?"

"I am truly sorry, sir,"

said the tailor, "but as you no doubt know, the best of us make mistakes sometimes."

"There is something in that," said the policeman, "and if the suit fits me I will forgive you."

Then he went into his dressing-room and put on the yellow coat and the green trousers. They fitted him beautifully. So that he forgave the tailor, and sent round to him to say that he would

try to pay his bill when he got some money.

After looking at himself a good deal in the mirror the policeman went out into the street and began to strut about in his new clothes. "This is much better than being a policeman," he said, "a policeman has little to do, but a soldier has nothing to do till he is sent for to fight. By the way I must go and buy a sword, and then I will

go up to the old man's house and let him see me in my new clothes. Perhaps he will give me two halfpennies to put in the pockets."

He bought his sword at the toy shop and went straight to the old man's house. When he got there the old woman was in the garden knocking apples off a tree with a clothes prop. No sooner did she see the policeman in hisyellow coat and green trousers than



The old woman was knocking apples off a tree.

she ran screaming into the house, and hid herself under the bed.

But when the old man saw him he shouted, "Hurrah, hurrah, the red policeman has turned soldier. Now we needn't be afraid of him any more."

And he called upstairs to his wife, "Come down at once and get me my bag."

The old woman came downstairs quickly. She took down

the bag from its nail and handed it to her husband. "Run," she said, "as hard as you can, and bring me a hen and anything else nice that takes your fancy. Bags were made to put things in. And the red policeman—the soldier, that is to say—will stay to dinner."

The soldier sat down in the chair and lit his pipe, and the old man went out with the bag. Very soon he returned

with two hens, a fat duck, several rolls of butter, a large piece of bacon, some cabbages, some ice cream, and two pots of marmalade.

The old woman cooked everything but the ice cream and the marmalade, and they had a very good dinner indeed.

"This is much better than being a policeman," said the soldier when they had finished.

"I should just think it was," said the old man.

"And so should I," said the old woman.

"Now I must wish you both good evening," said the soldier, "for I hear the bugle calling."

CHAPTER VIII.

When a soldier hears the bugle calling he is bound to go even if he would like to have stayed for supper. That is why the soldier went.

"I am glad I am not a soldier," said the old man, because I do not have to go when the bugle calls."

"No," said the old woman,

"but you have to go when I tell you, which is pretty much the same thing."

"Perhaps it is," said the old man.

"And I think," said the old woman, "that it might be just as well for you to go out this evening with the bag and get a few nice little things for breakfast and dinner to-morrow. For when you come to think of it there is no reason why the soldier should

not take it into his head to be a red policeman again, and if he did he would run after us when he saw us with the bag. So that we had better get what we want before he changes his mind."

"A very good idea, my dear," said the old man, "give me the bag and I will go out at once."

The old woman gave him the bag and off he went.

He was away a very long

time. Indeed he did not get back till nearly midnight. When he set the bag down on the table the old woman could see that he had got a good many things, because the bag bulged so.

"How good of you," she said. "Now show me what you have got."

Then the old man opened the bag. First he pulled out a pretty little kitten with her mother, an old grey cat.

"Very nice," said the old woman, "but we can't cook them."

"You cooked the hens," said the old man.

Then he pulled out a pillow case full of hay.

"Quite nice," said the old woman, "but we can't cook it."

"You cooked the cabbages," said the old man.

Then he pulled out a box full of pieces of broken glass.

"Beautiful!" said the old woman, "but we can't eat it."

"You ate the marmalade fast enough," said the old man.

"Then the old woman said, "If you go on talking so foolishly I shall be very cross. Turn that cat and her kitten out at once, burn the hay, and throw the broken glass out of the window."

"And what shall I do with the bag?" said the old man.

"You can do just as you please with the bag," said the old woman; "I am going to bed."

And off she went.

The old man opened the door and turned out the cat and her kitten. Then he burnt the hay a little bit at a time on the fire, and threw the broken glass out of the window.

After doing this he sat down in his chair to think.

"What shall I do with the bag?" he said to himself. "My wife said I might do what I pleased with it. Perhaps I had better burn it."

So he cut it in pieces with a knife, and burnt the pieces on the fire.

In the morning when the old woman came downstairs to breakfast she looked on the nail for the bag, but of course it was not there.



Burnt the pieces on the fire.

"What have you done with the bag?" she called to the old man.

"I have burnt it," said the old man.

"Why did you burn it?" said the old woman.

"Guess," said the old man.

The old woman guessed and guessed and guessed and guessed and guessed.

But she could not guess right, and the old man had to keep on saying, "Guess

again, guess again, guess again."

Now why did the old man burn his bag?

You must get your Mamma to tell you.